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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our helper, we sing Your praises and will not keep silent. You clothe us with gladness, and Your favor is for a lifetime.

Bless our lawmakers and hear them when they pray. As our Senators lift their fervent prayers, empower them to meet the challenges of our time. May they always seek You while You may be found, calling upon You while You are near. Lord, when great waters overflow them, protect and preserve them with Your great strength. Be for them a hiding place, and surround them with songs of deliverance.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

INTERNET TAX FREEDOM FOREVER ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Internet is a resource used daily by Americans of all ages all across our country. Students use it to research school projects and papers. Entrepreneurs use it to help run their busi-

nesses and come up with new ideas. Families use it to manage their busy schedules and stay in touch with their relatives. It is important that they be able to do this without the worry that their Internet access is being taxed.

Congress first voted to ban taxes on Internet access back in 1998, but it was only a temporary ban. Congress has since held that vote eight additional times—eight extensions of the Internet tax moratorium over these years. Today we have an opportunity to make it permanent.

The Internet Tax Freedom Act is a commonsense, bipartisan piece of legislation with 51 cosponsors. I appreciate the diligent work by the Republican Senator from South Dakota and the Democratic Senator from Oregon and, of course, the many efforts of our colleague from Utah to move this legislation. I look forward to supporting it today.

WAR ON TERROR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate joined together to overwhelmingly pass bipartisan legislation that will further isolate North Korea in response to its policy of aggression. It was necessary because our Nation faces a daunting array of threats and challenges from all across the globe. Our next Commander in Chief, regardless of political party, will face similar challenges upon taking office.

We see terrorist threats from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, from Al Qaeda, and from both of their respective affiliates. For example, the terrorist group that grew from Al Qaeda in Iraq, ISIL, is now not only capable of launching infantry assaults, suicide bomber attacks, and raids initiated by the detonation of IEDs, it is also working hard to radicalize individuals over the Internet and is determined to keep attacking Westerners right here where they live.

We see threats to stability in Afghanistan from Taliban forces and the Haqqani Network. For example, just this week we learned that additional U.S. forces will be needed to reinforce the Afghan National Security Forces in Helmand Province. We have a determined partner in President Ghani, and General Campbell has testified that we need to maintain a sufficient force posture to both train and advise them and also conduct counterterrorism operations.

We see challenges from countries looking to aggressively expand their influence, such as China and Russia and Iran, while, of course, diminishing our influence. For example, Russia is rebuilding its conventional and nuclear forces while launching cyber attacks, conducting espionage, and propping up paramilitary forces like we see in Ukraine. China is rebuilding and modernizing its conventional and nuclear forces, as it masters the tactics of low-intensity conflict designed to coerce our allies without provoking an overwhelming response from us.

The challenges we face today are very great. They are likely to be even greater tomorrow. All of this comes at a time when America must rebuild both its conventional and nuclear forces.

Clearly, the next Commander in Chief is going to take office confronting a complex and varied array of threats. After 7 years of the Obama administration delaying action in the War on Terror, the next administration will need to return to the fight and to restore our role in the world. We want to work with our next President, regardless of party, to do the things we know are needed to help protect our country, but that incoming leader also needs our help now, and we should take action now in this year of transition.

The Secretary of Defense last week announced two aspects of this—first, a defense budget request that emphasizes the weapons systems needed to balance

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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